ULKOPOLIITTINEN INSTITUUTTI
UTRIKESPOLITISKA INSTITUTET
THE FINNISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

FIIA COMMENT 6/2015

Charly Salonius-Pasternak
Senior Research Fellow
The Finnish Institute of International Affairs

Jarno Limnéll
Professor of Practice
Aalto University
Director / VP
Insta DecSec Oy

Preparing Finland for hybrid warfare > Social vulnerabilities and the threat of military force

Finland is well placed to withstand hybrid warfare. Nonetheless, preparations call for the strengthening of mental and physical crisis resilience, the creation of a unified picture of the situation, and the development of new means of defence and legislation.

The issue of hybrid warfare has recently entered the public debate in Finland, even though the concept itself is nothing new. It combines military, economic, political and other non-physical activities to achieve political objectives. The increased significance of hybrid warfare does not imply ruling out conventional warfare or military threats as facets of Finland's defence planning, but it does complicate societal preparedness.

Finland is well placed to meet the challenges of hybrid warfare, but such hybridization means that societal preparedness must be emphasized along with military capabilities. In particular, the impact of the accelerated escalation of crises, psychological and physical resilience and the strengthening of non-physical capabilities must be accentuated, without securitizing everything or creating an unwarranted sense of insecurity.

Finns tend to view warfare through the lens of World War II, when battle lines were relatively clear and the enemy's actions only affected the civilian population sporadically. Associated with this is a sense that war only begins with physical acts of violence. This view no longer holds true, however, entailing serious challenges for the Finnish state, individual citizens, as well as legislation.

Hybrid warfare can be seen as a more intelligent or efficient way to wage war because it seeks to achieve political goals without extensive use of armed forces and violence. Using a range of tools such as cyber-attacks, economic retaliatory measures, information operations, and limited physical attacks that generate uncertainty in the general population may be enough to achieve political goals.

A special feature of hybrid warfare is a conscious blurring of the lines between war and peace. Hybrid war is not declared, its initiation usually goes unnoticed, and it may or may not lead to large-scale armed warfare. Arguably, hybrid warfare includes all spheres of warfare and combines both conventional and unconventional means of waging war.

Hybrid warfare, as practised by Russia in Ukraine, raises issues that are particularly germane from Finland's perspective. First, the Russian state leadership's decision-making and implementation capacity has been swift, and it has succeeded in keeping the initiative in its own hands. Centralized decision-making is an advantage in hybrid warfare. Second, the timespan of events has been relatively short, and the escalation rapid.

The events in Ukraine point to a need to strengthen societal preparedness in Finland. This, in turn, calls for a holistic view of societal security, requiring citizens and different societal actors to be prepared to live and continue operating in abnormal conditions for extended periods of time.

Russian hybrid forms of warfare will continue to be discussed and debated in many countries, but at this stage it is already possible to highlight five key issues relating to preparedness.

It is essential for decision-making to be based on both a robust common operational picture and the identification of weak signals. This entails anticipation, the importance of physical and network intelligence-gathering, and international collaboration to improve situational awareness. The political leadership must be able to rely on a real-time and robust operational picture and must have the courage to make important decisions even in the face of very limited information.

Physical and especially psychological resilience must be among the priorities of the updated *Security Strategy for Society* document. This includes an increased ability to

Finnish Institute of
International Affairs
Kruunuvuorenkatu 4
POB 400
00161 Helsinki

Telephone
+358 (0)9 432 7000

Fax
+358 (0)9 432 7799

www.fiia.fi

absorb and filter impactful information, enhancing the capability to withstand the effects of cyber-attacks, and the resilience to function without electricity. These issues affect the entire population.

Investments in communications and cyber-security must be increased, and responsibility for strategic communications must be assigned to one part of the state administration. This naturally requires a clear strategy to communicate.

Preparing to counter hybrid warfare forces a government to consider how to respond to at least partially outsourced warfare, where the armed forces of a foreign state are not necessarily the most active (public) players. How can countermeasures be initiated in the event that a cyber-attack is outsourced to hacker groups outside of normal state structures, or if separatist groups coordinate with other states to exert political pressure? When the activity is outsourced, its very existence can be denied.

Laws relating to emergency powers should be re-examined and different scenarios rehearsed, so that decision-makers have the best possible tools to respond to the challenges of hybrid warfare. The scenarios must take account of the possibility of military force – or the threat of such a force – being rapidly deployed against Finland.

Hybrid warfare is difficult to prepare for, but the mental and physical resources put into preparedness would serve to strengthen society's overall resilience and capability to withstand unexpected events, whether caused by a natural disaster, a self-inflicted major catastrophe or an external state actor. Preparedness requires public debate and deliberation, as it is not "unjustified scaremongering", but rather a politic and realistic reaction to a changing world.